

Southern Editor Cautions On Shielding News Source

United Press International

A Southern editor yesterday challenged the constitutionality of proposed laws to protect reporters from being subpoenaed to disclose their confidential sources.

At the same Senate hearing, a broadcast news executive said the best insurance of fairness and accuracy is the force

of enlightened public opinion, not the strong arm of government.

They testified at a Senate Judiciary subcommittee hearing into press freedom.

William H. Fitzpatrick of Norfolk, Va., executive editor of the six Landmark Communications daily papers in Virginia and North Carolina, said the Bill of Rights — as well as guaranteeing freedom of the press — also provides for compulsory testimony in legal proceedings in search of the truth.

Credibility of the entire news media would be jeopardized if newsmen were immune from "the same responsibility to serve the public interest that is required of everybody else," he said.

Elmer W. Lower, a vice president of American Broadcasting Co., said the government has no place second-guessing the news judgment of trained professionals nor investigating journalistic efforts just because officials don't like them.

Strong support for legislation to protect reporters from having to disclose confidential sources was voiced by Robert B. Williamson, former chief justice of the Maine Supreme Court, and Fred P. Graham, reporter for The New York Times. They are members of a Twentieth Century Fund task force on government power and press freedom.

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By Charles Del Vecchio—The Washington Post

Robert Williamson, left, and Fred Graham testify at press freedom hearing.